

Message Text

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14

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-15

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INFO CINCPAC

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652 : NA

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, RP

SUBJECT: ESPALDON REPLACES FERNANDEZ AT SOWESCOM (ZAMBOANGAS,
SULU AND TAWI-TAWI)

REF: MANILA 9540

BEGIN SUMMARY: PHIL NAVY COMMODORE ESPALDON TO REPLACE
FERNANDEZ AT SOWESCOM. (ZAMBOANGAS, SULU AND TAWI-TAWI).
PREVIOUSLY ANNOUNCED ESTABLISHMENT SULU SEA FRONTIER COMMAND
CANCELLED. CHANGE SEEN AS SHIFT TO MORE CONCILIATORY APPROACH
BY AFP. END SUMMARY.

1. PHIL NAVY COMMODORE ROMULO ESPALDO HAS BEEN ASSIGNED
TO REPLACE COMMODORE GIL FERNANDEZ AS COMMANDER OF
SOWESCOM. FERNANDEZ WILL RETURN TO UNSPECIFIED ASSIGNMENT
AT AFP HEADQUARTERS.

2. ESPALDO WILL CONTINUE TO EXERCISE, CONCURRENTLY,
HIS NEWLY ASSIGNED CIVIL DUTIES AS GOVERNOR OF THE
RECENTLY CREATED PROVINCE OF TAWI-TAWI (REFTEL). HOWEVER,
THE PREVIOUSLY ANNOUNCED ESTABLISHMENT OF A SULU SEA

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FRONTIER COMMAND, FOR THE PROVINCES OF SULU AND TAWI-TAWI,

HAS BEEN SCRUBBED. AFP CHIEF OF STAFF ESPINO CONFIRMED THAT SUCH A NEW JOINT COMMAND UNDER ESPALDON HAD BEEN PRESIDENT MARCOS' ORIGINAL PLAN. ESPINO SAID, HOWEVER, THAT THIS HAD BEEN THOUGHT BY THE MILITARY LEADERSHIP TO BE AN INEFFICIENT USE OF LIMITED RESOURCES AND THEY HAD PERSUADED THE PRESIDENT TO CHANGE HIS DECISION.

3. ESPALDON, WHO HADS BEEN DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF, AFPAN IS WIDELY RESPECTED AS AN ABLE AND HONEST OFFICER. AFP OFFICERS' COMMENTS ON THE APPOINTMENT, STRESSED ESPALDON'S ABILITY TO SPEAK TAUSUS AND SAMAL, AS WELL AS HIS CHILDHOOD BACKGROUND IN THE AREA; THOUGH HE IS CHRISTIAN AND A NATIVE OF BICOL, HIS PARENTS WERE TEACHERS IN JOLO. ALSO STRESSED IS HIS UNDERSTANDING OF MUSLIM CUSTOMS. ESPALDO HAS BEEN QUOTED ON TELEVISION AS INTENDING INVITE REBEL LEADERS SERVE IN NEW PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT.

4. COMMENT: THE GENERAL TENOR OF AFP COMMENTS APPEARS SIGNAL A DESIRE FOR A CHANGED APPROACH IN THE SULUS FROM THAT OF HARDLINING FERNANDEZ.
PURNELL

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